

Plantronics BackBeat SENSE SE Review

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THE GOOD The water-resistant Plantronics BackBeat Sense SE is a light weight, comfortable on-ear wireless headphone that delivers very good sound for Bluetooth. It senses when you have it on or off, and it works well as a headset for making calls. Battery life is good, and the included carrying case is nice.

THE BAD Its low-end may not be strong enough for those looking for fatter bass.

THE BOTTOM LINE The well-designed Plantronics BackBeat Sense SE adds water resistance to one of the best on-ear wireless Bluetooth headphones in its price class.

Aside from the price, what's the difference between [Plantronics' standard BackBeat Sense](#) [5] wireless Bluetooth headphone [6] (\$180; £130; AU\$249) and the BackBeat Sense SE "Special Edition" (\$200; £140; AU\$280)? Two words: water resistance. The SE has a special "nano coating" technology that makes it water-resistant, which might come in handy if you're using these headphones outside, near the pool or just while you're sweating in the gym.

Note, however, that water-resistant does not mean water-proof. Don't go tossing these in a lake and expect them to survive.

As I said in my review of the standard BackBeat Sense -- which comes in black or white as opposed to the tan color of the SE -- this headphone is light weight (just 4.9 ounces or 140 grams) and very comfortable for an on-ear headphone, with a "self-adjusting" headband with a metal frame and memory-foam earpads that are clearly labeled "L" and "R." I found it to be as comfortable as the [Bose Soundlink On-Ear Bluetooth](#) [7] -- which, to be clear, is high praise.

Since this model is sweat-resistant I tried running with it and it stayed on my head fairly securely. I can't fully recommend it as a full-on "sport" headphone, but it will certainly work fine for joggers and fast walkers, as well as general gym use.

Some people have complained that the tight seal of the earcups offers such good noise isolation that you can hear your footsteps while walking. That's true -- you can hear your footfalls -- but that's par for the course and a small downside to many headphones that do a good job passively sealing out noise.

I like the feature set. As with the [Parrot Zik](#) [8] and [Zik 2.0](#) [9], the Sense SE has a sensor that knows when you have the headphones on and when you have them off. It pauses your music as soon as you take them off your ears and resumes playback when you put them on.

(Yes, you can deactivate it. To quote the manual: "To disable the sensors, hold both the Mute and Call buttons for more than 6 seconds until the LED flashes purple then red. Repeat to reactivate; the LED flashes purple then blue.")

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